

Meeting between President Saddam Hussein and the American Ambassador to Baghdad.

Held on Wednesday July 25 1990, 1pm local, Baghdad

After exchanging greetings, the President said:

"I have summoned you today to hold comprehensive political discussions with you. This is a message to President Bush".

Then the President continued:

"You know that we did not have relations with the US until 1984 and you know the circumstances and reasons which caused them to be severed. The decision to establish relations with the US were taken in 1980 during the two months prior to the war between us and Iran".

"When the war started, and to avoid misinterpretation, we postponed the establishment of relations hoping that the war would end soon".

"But because the war lasted for a long time, and to emphasize the fact that we are a non-aligned country, it was important to re-establish relations with the US. And we choose to do this in 1984".

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"It is natural to say that the US is not like Britain for example with the latter's historic relations with Middle Eastern countries, including Iraq. In addition, there were no relations between Iraq and the US between 1967 and 1984. One can conclude it would be difficult for the US to have a full understanding of many matters in Iraq. When relations were reestablished we hoped for a better understanding and for better cooperation because we too do not understand the background of many American decisions".

"We dealt with each other during the war and we had dealings on various levels. The most important of those levels were with the foreign ministers".

"We had hoped for a better common understanding and a better chance of cooperation to benefit both our peoples and the rest of the Arab nations".

"But these better relations have suffered from various rifts. The worst of these was in 1986 only 2 years after establishing relations - with what was known as Irangate, which happened during the year that Iran occupied the Fao peninsula".

"It was natural then to say that old relations and complexity of interests could absorb many mistakes. But when interests are limited and relations are not that old, then there isn't a deep understanding and mistakes could leave a negative effect. Sometimes the effect of an error can be larger than the error itself".

"Despite all of that, we accepted the apology, via his envoy, of the American President regarding Irangate and we wiped the slate clean. And we shouldn't unearth the past except when new events remind us that old mistakes were not just a matter of coincidence".

"Our suspicions increased after we liberated the Fao peninsula. The media began to involve itself in our politics. And our suspicions began

to surface anew. Because we began to question whether the US felt uneasy with the outcome of the war when we liberated our land".

"It was clear to us that certain parties in the United States - and I don't say the President himself - but certain parties who had links with the intelligence community and with the State Dept - and I don't say the Secretary of State himself - I say that these parties did not like the fact that we liberated our land. Some parties began to prepare studies entitled: 'Who will succeed Saddam Hussein?'. They began to contact Gulf States to make them fear Iraq; to persuade them not to give Iraq economic aid. And we have evidence of these activities".

The President continued:

"Iraq came out of the war burdened with \$40 million debts, excluding the aid given by Arab states some of whom consider that too to be a debt. Although they knew - and you knew too - that without Iraq they would not have had these sums and the future of the region would have been entirely different".

"We began to face the policy of the drop in the price of oil. Then we saw the United States which always talks of democracy, but which has no time for the other point of view. Then the media campaign against Saddam Hussein was started by the official American media. The United States thought that the situation in Iraq was like Poland, Romania or Czechoslovakia. We were disturbed by this campaign but we were not disturbed too much because we had hoped that, in a few months, those who are decision makers in America would have a chance to find the facts and see whether this media campaign had had any effect on the lives of Iraqis. We had hoped that soon the American authorities would take the correct decision regarding their relations with Iraq. Those with good relations can sometimes afford to disagree".

"But when planned and deliberate policy forces the price of oil down without good commercial reasons then that means another war against Iraq. Because military war kills people by bleeding them. And economic

war kills their humanity by depriving them of their chance to have a good standard of living. As you know, we gave rivers of blood in a war that lasted 8 years, but we did not lose our humanity. Iraqis have a right to live proudly; we do not accept that anyone could injure Iraqi pride or the Iraqi right to have high standards of living".

"Kuwait and UAE were at the front of this policy aimed at lowering Iraq's position and depriving its people of higher economic standards. And you know that our relations with the Emirates and Kuwait had been good. On top of all that, while we were busy at war, the state of Kuwait began to expand at the expense of our territory".

"You may say this is propaganda, but I would direct you to one document - the Military Patrol Line - which is the border line endorsed by the Arab States League in 1961 for military patrols not to cross [the Iraq-Kuwait border]".

"But go and look for yourselves. You will see the Kuwaiti border patrols, the Kuwaiti farms, the Kuwaiti oil installations - all built as closely as possible to this line to establish that land as Kuwaiti territory".

"Since then [1961], the Kuwaiti government has been stable while the Iraqi government has undergone many changes. Even after 1968 [when the Ba'ath party came to power] and for 10 years afterwards, we were too busy with our own problems. First in the north [the war against the Kurds] then the 1973 war [Yom Kippur], and other problems. Then came the war with Iran which started 10 years ago".

"We believe that the United States must understand that people who live in luxury and economic security can reach an understanding with the United States on what are legitimate joint interests. But the starved and the economically deprived cannot reach the same understanding".

"We do not accept threats from anyone because we do not threaten anyone. But we say clearly that we hope that the US will not entertain too many

illusions and will seek new friends rather than increase the number of its enemies".

"I have read the American statements speaking of friends in the area. Of course, it is the right of everyone to choose their friends. We can have no objections. But you know you are not the ones who protected your friends during the war with Iran. I assure you, had the Iranians overrun the region, the American troops would not have stopped them, except by the use of nuclear weapons".

"I do not belittle you. But I hold this view by looking at the geography and nature of American society into account. Yours is a society which cannot accept 10,000 dead in one battle".

"You know that Iran agreed to the ceasefire not because the United States had bombed one of the oil platforms after the liberation of the Fau. Is this Iraq's reward for its role in securing the stability of the region and for protecting it from an unknown flood?"

"So what can it mean when America says it will now protect its friends? It can only mean prejudice against Iraq".

"This stance plus manoeuvres and statements which have been made has encouraged the UAE and Kuwait to disregard Iraqi rights".

"I say to you clearly that Iraq's rights, which are mentioned in the memorandum, we will take one by one. That might not happen now or after a month or after one year, but we will take it all. We are not the kind of people who will relinquish their rights. There is no historic right, or legitimacy, or need, for the UAE and Kuwait to deprive us of our rights. If they are needy, we too are needy".

"The United States must have a better understanding of the situation and declare who it wants to have relations with and who its enemies are. But it should not make enemies simply because others have different points of view regarding the Arab-Israeli conflict".

"We clearly understand America's statement that it wants an easy flow of oil. We understand America saying that it seeks friendship with the States in the region, and to encourage their joint interests. But we cannot understand the attempt to encourage some parties to harm Iraq's interests".

"The United States wants to secure the flow of oil. This is understandable and known. But it must not deploy methods which the United States says it disapproves of i.e. flexing muscles and pressure".

"If you use pressure, we will deploy pressure and force".

"We know that you can harm us although we do not threaten you. But we too can harm you. Everyone can cause harm according to their ability and their size".

"We cannot come all the way to you in the United States but individual Arabs may reach you".

"You can come to Iraq with aircraft and missiles but do not push us to the point where we cease to care. And when we feel that you want to injure our pride and take the Iraqis' chance of a high standard of living, then we will cease to care and death will be the choice for us. Then we would not care if you fired one hundred missiles for each missile we fired. Because without pride, life would have no value".

"It is not reasonable to ask our people to bleed rivers of blood for 8 years then to tell them: now you have to accept aggression from Kuwait, the UAE or from the US or from Israel".

"We do not put all these countries in the same boat. First, we are hurt and upset that such disagreement is taking place between us and Kuwait and the UAE. The solution must be found within an Arab framework and through direct bi-lateral relations. We do not place America among the enemies; we place it where we want our friends to be and we try to be friends. But repeated American statements last year made it apparent

that America did not regard us as friends. Well, the Americans are free".

"When we seek friendship, we want pride, liberty and our right to choose".

"We want to deal according to our status as we deal with the others according to their status".

"We consider the others' interests while we look after our own. And we expect the others to consider our interests while they are dealing with their own. What does it mean when the Zionist War Minister is summoned to the United States now? What do they mean- these fiery statements coming out of Israel during the past few days and the talk of war being expected now more than at any other time?"

"We don't want war because we know what war means. But do not push us to consider war as the only solution to live proudly and to provide our people with a good living".

"We know that the United States has nuclear weapons. But we are determined either to live as proud men, or we all die. We do not believe that there is one single honest man on earth who would not understand what I mean".

"We do not ask you to solve our problems. I said that our Arab problems will be solved amongst ourselves. But do not encourage anyone to take action which is greater than their status permits".

"I do not believe that anyone would lose by making friends with Iraq. In my opinion, the American President has not made mistakes regarding the Arabs, although his decision to freeze dialogue with the PLO was wrong. But it appears that this decision was made to appease the Zionist lobby or as a piece of strategy to cool the Zionist anger, before trying again. I hope that our latter conclusion is the correct one. But we will carry on saying it was the wrong decision".

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"You are appeasing the usurper in so many ways: economically, politically and militarily as well as in the media. When will the time come when, for every three appeasements to the usurper, you praise the Arabs just once? When will humanity find its real chance to seek a just American solution that would balance the human rights of two hundred million human beings with the rights of three million Jews? We want friendship, but we are not running for it. We reject harm by anybody. If we are faced with harm, we will resist. This is our right, whether the harm comes from America or the UAE or Kuwait or from Israel. But I do not put all these states on the same level. Israel stole the Arab land, supported by the US. But the UAE and Kuwait do not support Israel.

★ [Anyway, they are Arabs. But when they try to weaken Iraq, then they are helping the enemy. And then Iraq has the right to defend itself".

"In 1974, I met with Idriss, the son of Mullah Mustafa Barzani (the late Kurdish leader). He sat in the same seat as you are sitting now. He came asking me to postpone implementation of autonomy in Iraq Kurdistan, which was agreed on March 11 1970. My reply was: we are determined to fulfil our obligation. You also have to stick to your agreement. When I sensed that Barzani had evil intention, I said to him: give my regards to your father and tell him that Saddam Hussein says the following. I explained to him the balance of power with figures exactly the way I explained to the Iranians in my open letters to them during the war. I finished this conversation with the result summarized in one sentence: if we fight, we shall win. Do you know why? I explained all the reasons to him, plus one political reason - you (the Kurds in 1974) depended on our disagreement with the Shah of Iran (Kurds were financed by Iran). The route of the Iranian conflict is their claim of half of the Shatt al-Arab waterway. If we could keep the whole of Iraq with Shatt al-Arab, we will make no concessions. But if forced to choose between half of Shatt al-Arab or the whole of Iraq, then we will give the Shatt al-Arab away, to keep the whole of Iraq in the shape we wish it to be".

"We hope that you are not going to push events to make us bear this wisdom in mind in our relations with Iran. After that (meeting with Barzani's son), we gave half of Shatt al-Arab away (1975 Algeria



agreement]. And Barzani died and was buried outside Iraq and he lost his war".

The President said, directing his speech to the US Ambassador:

"We hope we are not pushed into this. All that lies between relations with Iran is Shatt al-Arab. When we are faced with a choice between Iraq living proudly and Shatt al-Arab then we will negotiate using the wisdom we spoke of in 1975. In the way Barzani lost his historic chance, others will lose their chance too".

"With regards to President Bush, I hope the President will read this himself and will not leave it in the hands of a gang in the State Dept. I exclude the Secretary of State and Kelly because I know him and I exchanged views with him".

The United States Ambassador said:

"I thank you, Mr President, and it is a great pleasure for a diplomat to meet and talk directly with the President. I clearly understand your message. We studied history at school. They taught us to say freedom or death".

"I think you know well that we as a people have our experience with the colonialists".

"Mr. President, you mentioned many things during this meeting which I cannot comment on on behalf of my government. But with your permission, I will comment on two points. You spoke of friendship and I believe it was clear from the letters sent by our President to you on the occasion of your National Day that he emphasizes...." (interruption)

The President said:

"He was kind and his expressions met with our regard and respect".

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The Ambassador said:

"As you know, he directed the United States Administration to reject the suggestion of implementing trade sanctions".

The President said (smiling):

"There is nothing left for us to buy from America. Only wheat. Because every time we want to buy something, they say it is forbidden. I am afraid that one day you will say: you are going to make gunpowder out of wheat".

The Ambassador said:

"I have a direct instruction from the President to seek better relations with Iraq".

The President said:

"But how? We too have this desire. But matters are running contrary to this desire".

The Ambassador said:

"This is less likely to happen, the more we talk. For example, you mentioned the issue of the article published by the American Information Agency and that was sad. And a formal apology was presented".

The President said:

"Your stance is generous".

"We are Arabs. It is enough for us that someone says: I am sorry. I made a mistake. Then we carry on. But the media campaign continued. And it is full of stories. If the stories were true, no-one would get upset.

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But we understand from its continuation, that there is a determination [to harm relations]".

The Ambassador said:

"I saw the Diane Sawyer programme on ABC. And what happened in that programme was cheap and unjust. And this is a real picture of what happens in the American media - even to American politicians themselves. These are the methods the Western media employs. I am pleased that you add your voice to the diplomats who stand up to the media. Because your appearance in the media, even for five minutes, would help us to make the American people understand Iraq. This would increase mutual understanding. If the American President had control of the media, his job would be much easier".

"Mr. President - not only do I want to say that President Bush wanted better and deeper relations with Iraq, but he also wants an Iraqi contribution to peace and prosperity in the Middle East. President Bush is an intelligent man. He is not going to declare an economic war against Iraq".

"You are right. It is true what you say that we do not want higher prices for oil. But I would ask you to examine the possibility of not charging too high a price for oil".

The President said:

"We do not want too high prices for oil. And I remind you that in 1974 I gave Tariq Aziz the idea for an article he wrote which criticized the policy of keeping oil prices high. It was the first Arab article which expressed this view".

Tariq Aziz said:

"Our policy in Opec opposes sudden jumps in oil prices".

The President said:

"\$25 a barrel is not a high price".

The Ambassador said:

"We have many Americans who would like to see the price go above \$25 because they come from oil producing states".

The President said:

"The price at one stage had dropped to \$12 a barrel and a reduction in the modest Iraqi budget of \$6 - 7 billion is a disaster".

The Ambassador said:

"I think I understand this. I have lived here for years. I admire your extraordinary efforts to rebuild your country. I know you need funds. We understand that and our opinion is that you should have the opportunity to rebuild your country. But we have no opinion on the Arab-Arab conflicts, like your border disagreement with Kuwait".

"I was in the American Embassy in Kuwait during the late 60s. The instruction we had during this period was that we should express no opinion on this issue and that the issue is not associated with America. James Baker has directed our official spokesman to emphasize this instruction. We hope you can solve this problem using any suitable methods via Kalaibi [Sec-Gen Arab States League] or via President Mubarak. All that we hope is that these issues are solved quickly. With regard to all of this, can I ask you to see how the issue appears to us?"

"My assessment after 25 years service in this area is that your objective must have strong backing from your Arab brothers. I now speak of oil. But you, Mr. President, have fought through a horrific and painful war. Frankly, we can only see that you have deployed massive troops in the

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South. Normally that would not be any of our business. But when this happens in the context of what you said on your National Day; then when we read the details in the two letters of the Foreign Minister; then when we see the Iraqi point of view that the measures taken by the UAR and Kuwait is, in the final analysis, parallel to military aggression against Iraq, then it would be reasonable for me to be concerned. And for this reason, I received an instruction to ask you, in the spirit of friendship - not in the spirit of confrontation - regarding your intentions".

"I simply describe the concern of my government. And I do not mean that the situation is a simple situation. But our concern is a simple one".

The President said:

"We do not ask people not to be concerned when peace is at issue. This is a noble human feeling which we all feel. It is natural for you as a superpower to be concerned. But what we ask is not to express your concern in a way that would make an aggressor believe that he is getting support for his aggression".

"We want to find a just solution which will give us our rights but not deprive others of their rights. But at the same time, we want the others to know that our patience is running out regarding their action, which is harming even the milk our children drink, and the pensions of the widow who lost her husband during the war, and the pensions of the orphans who lost their parents".

"As a country, we have the right to prosper. We lost so many opportunities and the others should value the Iraqi role in their protection. Even this Iraqi" - the President points at the interpreter - "feels bitter like all other Iraqis. We are not aggressors but we do not accept aggression either. We sent them envoys and handwritten letters. We tried everything. We asked the Servant of the Two Shrines - King Fahd - to hold a 4 member summit, but he suggested a meeting between the oil ministers. We agreed. And as you know, the meeting took

place in Jeddah. They reached an agreement which did not express what we wanted, but we agreed".

"Only 2 days after the meeting, the Kuwaiti oil minister made a statement that contradicted the agreement. We also discussed the issue during the Baghdad summit. I told the Arab Kings and Presidents that some brothers are fighting an economic war against us. And that not all were use weapons and we regard this kind of war as a military action against us. Because if the capability of our army is lowered then, if Iran renewed the war, it could achieve goals which it could not achieve before. And if we lowered the standard of our defences, then this could encourage Israel to attack us. I said that before the Arab Kings and Presidents. Only I did not mention Kuwait and UAE by name, because they were my guests".

"Before this, I had sent them envoys reminding them that our war had included their defence. Therefore the aid they gave us should not be regarded as a debt. We did more than the United States would have done against someone who attacked its interests".

"I talked about the same thing with a number of other Arab states. I explained the situation to brother King Fahd a few times, by sending envoys and on the telephone. I talked with brother King Hussein and with Sheikh Zaid after the conclusion of the summit. I walked with the Sheikh to the plane when he was leaving Mosul. He told me - just wait until I get home. But after he had reached his destination, the statements that came from there were very bad; not from him, but from his minister of oil".

"Also after the Jeddah agreement, we received some intelligence that they were talking of sticking to the agreement for two months only. Then they would change their policy. Now tell us: if the American President found himself in this situation, what would he do? I said it was very difficult for me to talk about these issues in public. But we must tell the Iraqi people who face economic difficulties who was responsible for that."

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The Ambassador said:

"I spent four beautiful years in Egypt".

The President said:

"The Egyptian people are kind and good and ancient. The oil people are supposed to help the Egyptian people, but they are mean beyond belief. It is painful to admit it, but some of them are disliked by Arabs because of their greed".

The Ambassador said:

"Mr. President, it would be helpful if you could give us an assessment of the effort made by your Arab brothers and whether they have achieved anything".

The President said:

"On this subject, we agreed with President Mubarak that the Prime Minister of Kuwait would meet with the Deputy Chairman of the Revolution Command Council in Saudi Arabia, because the Saudis initiated contact with us, aided by President Mubarak's efforts. He just telephoned me a short while ago to say the Kuwaitis have agreed to that suggestion".

The Ambassador said:

"Congratulations".

The President said:

"A protocol meeting will be held in Saudi Arabia. Then the meeting will be transferred to Baghdad for deeper discussion directly between Kuwait and Iraq. We hope we will reach some result. We hope that the long term view and the real interests will overcome Kuwaiti greed".

The Ambassador said:

"May I ask you when you expect Sheikh Saad to come to Baghdad?"

The President said:

"I suppose it would be on Saturday or Monday at the latest [July 28 or 30]. I told brother Mubarak that the agreement should be in Baghdad Saturday or Sunday. You know that brother Mubarak's visit have always been a good omen".

The Ambassador said:

"This is good news. Congratulations".

The President said:

"Brother President Mubarak told me they were scared. They said troops were only 20 kms north of the Arab League line [the Kuwaiti border]. I said to him that regardless of what is there, whether they are police, border guards or army, and regardless of how many are there, and what they are doing, assure the Kuwaitis and give them our word that we are not going to do anything, until we meet with them. When we meet and when we see that there is hope, then nothing will happen. But if we are unable to find a solution, then it will be natural that Iraq will not accept death, even though wisdom is above everything else. There you have good news".

Tariq Aziz said:

"This is a journalistic exclusive".

The Ambassador said:

"I am planning to go to the United States next Monday [July 30]. I hope I will meet with President Bush in Washington next week. I thought to

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postpone my trip because of the difficulties we are facing. But now I will fly on Monday\*.

At the end of the meeting, they exchanged greetings and good wishes.

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